

Wakefield Homelessness Strategy

2014 – 2019



Finding solutions to improved and improving homeless prevention services

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Vision

Our vision is to deliver improved and improving homeless prevention services to anyone in the Wakefield District who is homeless or threatened with homelessness or who find themselves in a housing crisis. We are committed to delivering comprehensive housing advice, housing options and homeless prevention services to help people access the right type of accommodation for their needs at a price they can afford. We will continue to work with our partners to address wider needs in particular health, employment and developing skill capacity for people to be independent. We will strive, where possible, to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms on vulnerable households' ability to obtain and sustain affordable housing that meets their needs.

As a Local Authority we have a duty set out in the Homelessness Act 2002 to formulate a homelessness strategy. This strategy sets out how we will tackle homelessness over the five year period 2014 to 2019. It reflects both local and Government policy and its strategic direction in relation to homelessness, the new direction in policy on national welfare reforms; some implemented, some anticipated and finally it reflects the experience and knowledge of local homelessness issues.

Wakefield District - Housing Needs and Demand

Nearly two thirds of the homes in the District are owner occupied. This proportion of people, owning their homes outright or with a mortgage is just below the national average. There are serious concerns that repossession levels may rise as a result of the economic downturn and the subsequent recession, particularly if there were to be an increase in mortgage lending rates. Such an increase may result in additional pressure on many homeowner finances that are already stretched to the limit.

In the Wakefield District around 24% of households are in social rented homes, this is a reduction of 4% since 2001, but still remains a high percentage compared with the National and Yorkshire and Humber average whilst the number of households private renting has increased significantly since 2001, up from 6,600 to 14,400 in 2011.

The 2011 Census tells us that the number of households in the District is expected to grow by 46,700 people over the next 20 years. Household growth is being caused by people living longer and doing so in their own homes, by increasing numbers of younger people living alone and by a rising birth rate.

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Our local housing framework is being radically reformed, with the objective that we will, along with our Registered Providers have greater control over the use of social and affordable housing, which increasingly needs to be used equitably. Wakefield's Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018¹; acknowledges that meeting and planning for housing need is becoming more difficult. It recognises that the number of households is growing faster than the supply of new homes, average earnings are not keeping pace with inflation and living costs are increasing. Poor health and reduced wellbeing are also a concern in the District. Residents are also getting older and there are too few homes specifically built to meet some community needs.

The strategy therefore, sets out its strategic priorities for more homes, better homes and places, housing investment; jobs and opportunities and improving health and well-being. These priorities along with the strategic outcomes set out here will help us to prevent homelessness, minimise the use of temporary accommodation, provide an effective housing options service and appropriately utilise suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

Wakefield District's Empty Homes Strategy also contributes to tenants benefiting from having a wider choice of properties to rent. In the Wakefield District 3.96% of the housing stock is vacant, compared to the regional average of 4.06%². Over 1,000 empty homes have been brought back into use over the last 5 years.

A new interest free Tenancy Support Loan now provides assistance for tenants to help bridge the gap for the first housing benefit payment and or rent deposit bond for private sector landlords accredited by the Council.

Over the last 5 years the Council has helped more than 400 homeowners stave off the threat of repossession. The Council's ability to prevent homelessness amongst struggling home owners will be reduced in the future as the Government have withdrawn the Mortgage Rescue Scheme from March 2014.

The combined effect of the economic downturn, with benefit changes linked to the Government welfare reform agenda, are likely to impact adversely on vulnerable households' ability to obtain and maintain accommodation across all tenures. The impact of the Social Sector Size Criteria (the Bedroom Tax) and the extension of the Single Room Rate to all single people under 35 years old claiming housing benefit are already being felt in both the social and private rented sectors whilst further concerns exist particularly around the implementation of Universal Credit which is scheduled to be rolled out nationally in 2016.

¹ Wakefield Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018¹; Good housing in a thriving 21st Century

² Wakefield Council Empty Properties webpage

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Often the experiences that have led to homelessness are distressing; domestic violence, breakdown of a relationship, repossession or rent arrears. People feel a sense of isolation, feelings of disempowerment and their experiences often has an adverse effect on health both physical and mental. This is even more severe when people sleep on the streets.

Just one thing – like losing your job or falling ill – can put you at risk of losing your home. You risk getting trapped in a downward spiral, unable to climb out. Without a stable home, it is almost impossible to get back on your feet.

Shelter: Save our Safety Net Campaign 2014

National context

Successive Governments have recognised the value of effective homelessness prevention services and have encouraged and funded local authorities to develop such services through, for example, the Homelessness Grant and the Preventing Repossession Fund. It has been universally recognised that tackling the effects of homelessness can be costly to the public purse when compared to the costs associated with proactively seeking to prevent homelessness in the first place³.

However despite this focus at both a local and national level, homelessness has risen in England in recent years, following a long term downward trend since 2003.

Government statistics show homelessness and rough sleeping are significant problems across England. 2,309 rough sleepers were counted or estimated by local authorities to be out on any one night in 2012. This was up 6% from 2011 (2,181) and 31% from 2010 (1,768). Over the past three years the number of statutory homelessness acceptances has increased by 34%⁴.

Homeless Link estimate that 185,000 adults experience homelessness each year in England, and that 2.31m households contain a concealed single person seeking their own accommodation.

In an ideal world supply would always keep pace with demand, but we are a long way off from having the number of affordable homes we need.

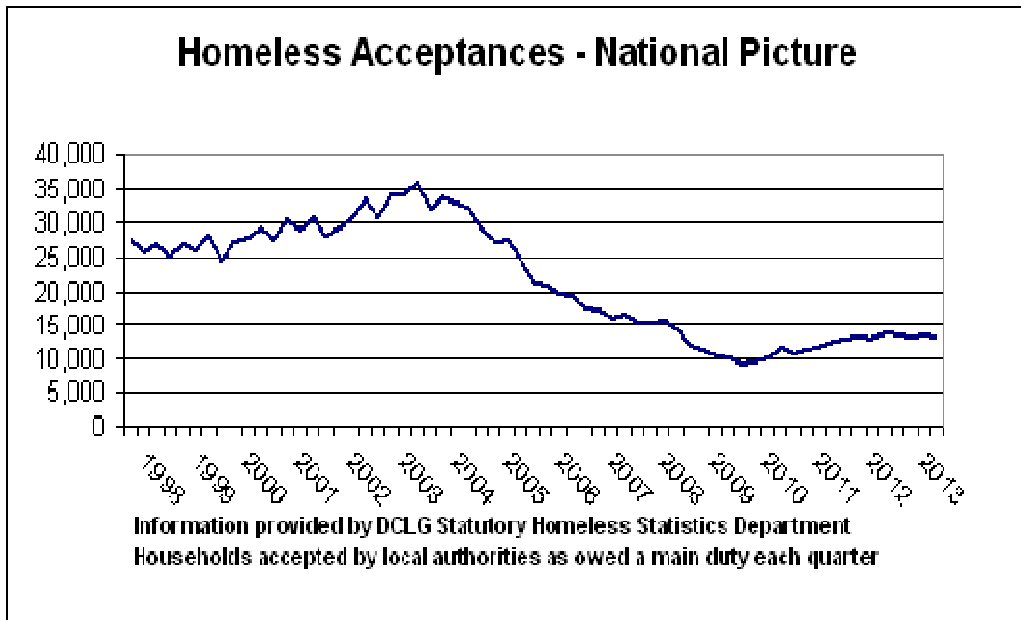
Homeless Link 2014

³ Dept. Communities & Local Government "Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness", August 2012

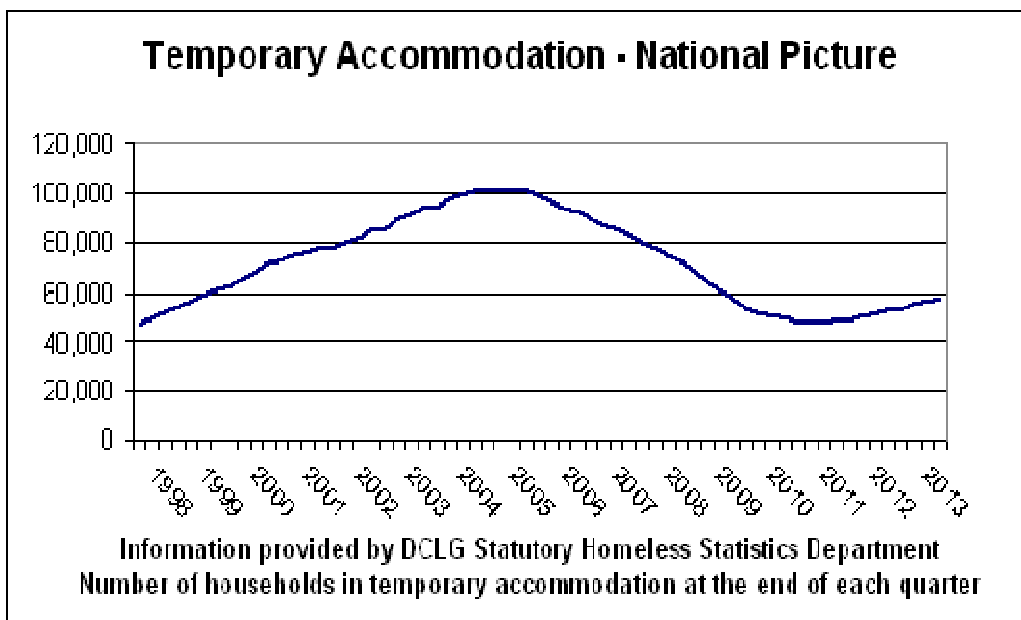
⁴ Housing Statistical Release, Statutory Homelessness: January to March 2013 and 2012/13, England

National Statistics

National trend for Homeless Acceptances 1998-2013



National trend for number of h/holds in temporary accommodation 1998-2013



Increasing numbers of people are becoming homeless as a result of losing private tenancies as assured short-hold tenancies are not being renewed. Nationally over 1 in 4 households accepted as homeless had lost their last home because of the end of an assured short-hold tenancy in Quarter 3 2013, an increase of 53% on Quarter 3 2011. This is a concern mirrored in local

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statistics that also show an increase in homelessness linked to loss of private rented accommodation.

The Coalition Government's current thinking in relation to developing effective homelessness prevention, housing advice and options services is set out in its strategy document '**Making Every Contact Count, A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness**'⁵ The approach to preventing homelessness is the promotion of joined up services and of a modern homeless response where a preventative approach takes precedence. No single agency can eradicate homelessness but partnership working can make a significant impact.

The Government has asked the sector to adopt its '**Gold Standard**', a ten point challenge encouraging local authorities to develop strong local leadership and partnerships, and ensure essential links are made between services:

Gold Standard

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness

Wakefield's progress: Wakefield has a strong record on delivering homeless prevention services and this is reinforced within this current strategy

2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs

Wakefield's progress: This point forms a specific action point, Target 12, within the Delivery Plan contained within this strategy document.

3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients

Wakefield's progress: We currently meet this standard and are continually looking at ways to improve the service.

4. Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model, or an effective local alternative

Wakefield's progress: We have implemented an effective model and will be considering options to extend it beyond the end of the pilot date of April 2015

⁵ Making Every Contact Count, A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness August 2012 DCLG

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5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support

Wakefield's progress: Pathways are in place for most client including mental health, learning disability, physical disability via the Housing Needs Panel. Single homeless clients and rough sleepers are provided for via either the preventing rough sleeping model, direct access provision and supported housing schemes. We are committed to further develop pathways under Targets 3, 4, 5, & 7 in the Delivery Plan.

6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords

Wakefield's progress: The Vulnerable Adults Service already works effectively to access private rented accommodation for households threatened with homelessness and seeks to build on this through the implementation of its Private Rented Sector Offer policy and through targets 3, 8, 9, 11 & 12 in the Delivery Plan

7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions

Wakefield's progress: We already achieve this through the Housing Advice Team who undertake advocacy and representation in relation to mortgage possession hearings

8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually

Wakefield's progress: This document is the third Homelessness Strategy that Wakefield has put in place and it will be reviewed annually at the multi-agency Homelessness Forum

9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation

Wakefield's progress: In emergency situations, including out of hours situations, we still use hotels for short periods of time to accommodate homeless 16/17 year olds. This is a challenging standard but we have commitment within the delivery plan to try and achieve it (Target 21).

10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Wakefield's progress: In emergency situations, including out of hours situations, we still use hotels for short periods of time to accommodate homeless families. This is a challenging standard but we have commitment within the delivery plan to try and achieve it (Target 21).

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As a response to this challenge we have committed to work towards achieving these standards and have consequently embedded them into our Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan to ensure the appropriate focus is achieved.

Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 has introduced many changes and challenges to residents of Wakefield. The Government rationale behind the reforms is to create the right incentives to get more people into work resulting in a fairer benefit and tax credit system. However, locally we are experiencing a wide range of consequences of welfare reform, some of which pose a potential risk of homelessness to those affected.

- **Benefits Cap:** This creates a cap on the maximum benefit payable to households. For families the cap is £500 per week and for singles it is £350 per week. The cap includes any payments of housing benefit. Initially approximately 90 households within the District were affected by this measure although numbers will fluctuate up and down (between 70-85) as household's entitlement to benefits change.
- **Changes to the single room rate:** The single person rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) entitlement in the private rented sector is capped so that it will only cover the cost of a single room in a shared property. This has been extended to all single claimants aged up to 35 years of age (previously it was set at 25).
- **Social Sector Size Criteria (The Bedroom Tax):** Housing benefit payments to households of working age in the social housing sector is now limited to the size of property (i.e. the number of bedrooms) judged to be appropriate for the household composition. This means households will lose a proportion of their housing benefit entitlement if they have spare or unused bedrooms. Wakefield District Housing (WDH) have reported that over 5000 of their tenants have been effected by the bedroom tax.
- **Introduction of Universal Credit:** DWP's current plans are that Universal Credit will be available in each part of the country from 2016. This is also predicted to have a significant impact when roll out commences as there are concerns about increasing rent arrears possibly leading to eviction as the housing costs element of benefit will be paid, along with other benefit entitlements, as a single payment to the claimant rather than directly to the landlord. There is a concern that this will lead

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to landlords being less likely to let properties to tenants claiming current benefits and Universal Credit in the future.

We are seeing significant movement of social housing tenants, affected by the Social Sector Size Criteria, downsizing in order to secure accommodation that is more affordable. As a result of this downsizing demand for smaller one bed properties is increasing. This is adversely impacting on single people who are looking to rent from social landlords as fewer properties are available to them within the private rented sector due to the restrictions on LHA payments.

Paradoxical situations are also arising as options to downsize may not always be available to tenants with rent arrears as Registered Providers rent arrears policies prevent them moving whilst they have debt.

It is anticipated that evictions will increase as a result of welfare reform changes. Therefore, mitigation against the impact of the changes will continue to be a priority as demand for services is likely to rise going forward. To date we have been proactive in addressing the challenges of welfare reform and have trained staff so they have been able to prepare, support & advise homeless or potential homeless households affected by the changes.

Tackling Rough Sleeping

In 2012 the Local Authorities from the West Yorkshire Sub-Region; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield, received a one-off payment from the Government to ensure front line provision prevented single homelessness and rough sleeping and supported the national roll out of 'No Second Night Out'⁶.

This funding has enabled us to co-ordinate our approach and resulted in Wakefield Council, in partnership with the Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI), Riverside ECHG and Wakefield Rent Deposit Scheme (WRDS), developing a specific '**Preventing Rough Sleeping Model**' which is a new response to tackling rough sleeping in the Wakefield district.

The model aims to identify and help new rough sleepers off the streets as soon as possible and will also offer assistance to longer term rough sleepers to provide an opportunity to resolve their homelessness/rough sleeping.

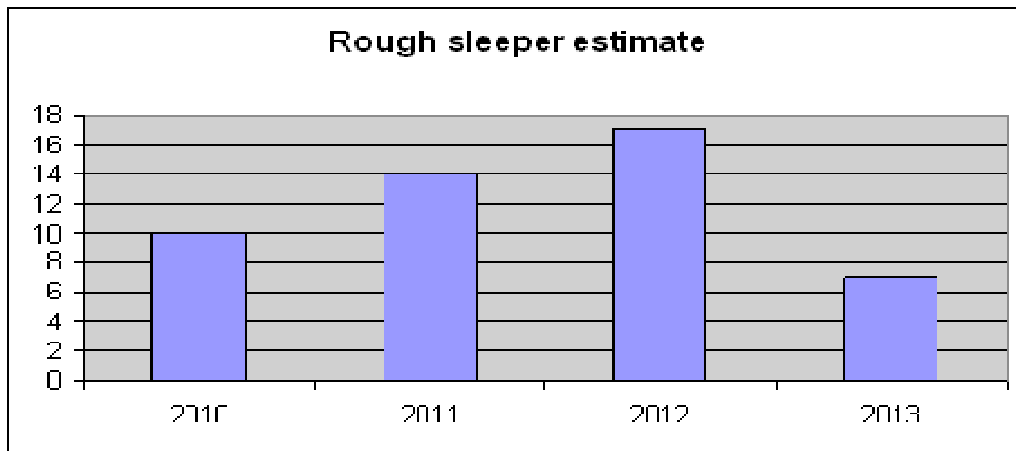
Successful outcomes are obtained by utilising existing accommodation provision, schemes and support arrangements that are provided by a variety partner organisations along with new provision provided directly by the model.

⁶ No Second Night Out is a national programme aimed at ensuring those who find themselves sleeping rough for the first time need not spend a second night on the streets

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Members of the public have been encouraged to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough so that action can be taken to provide appropriate advice, assistance and consideration to the individual's circumstances.

The estimate submitted to the Government in 2013 of the number of people typically sleeping rough on a single night in the Wakefield district was 7. This represents a reduction compared to previous years and indicates that both the hard work and dedication of organisations helping this client group and the new initiatives created to helping rough sleepers are making a positive impact in our district.



We are keen to ensure the causes of rough sleeping within the District continue to be addressed and that services are promoted and available to assist people who feel they have no alternative but to consider sleeping rough.

Since 2006 Wakefield Council has arranged for a shelter to be made available for rough sleepers during periods of severe cold weather. Wakefield Baptist Church are contracted to provide the cold weather provision and the night shelter is now well established. During the winter of 2012/13, 66 individuals were in need of shelter, support and a hot meal. Our Rough Sleeper Support Worker works in partnership with the church and attends drop in sessions to offer additional support and advice to rough sleepers with a view to helping them access appropriate accommodation.

Trinity Mission, one of a number of faith groups or voluntary sector organisations who are committed to responding to homelessness and rough sleeping, have also established a night shelter in Castleford which opens during the colder months of the year.

Wakefield Homelessness Forum

We firmly believe in Wakefield that collaboration between partner agencies and the sharing of resources provides great benefits and more effective solutions. By pooling resources we can create more holistic and personalised services. The bringing together of expertise, which can introduce new insights and solutions to the complexities around homelessness, is invaluable. The **Wakefield District Homelessness Forum** is a large partnership, which helps to give partners a clearer direction and clarity of purpose. This has enabled us to achieve our objectives set out in our last strategy. It is with this success that we will be moving forward confident that we will be able to deliver benefits to those who are homeless or who are threatened with homeless. The Homelessness Forum will continue to meet and will monitor the delivery of the five year Delivery Plan outlined in this document.

Consultation

A wide variety of partners and stakeholders, including service users, have been consulted in relation to the development of this Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2019. Their views have been sought in relation to;

- What they perceive to be the main causes of homelessness and the main barriers or difficulties homeless people experience in terms of accessing appropriate housing and support
- How best to prevent homelessness
- What key issues or actions they would like to see addressed in the Delivery Plan.

A number of key themes emerged from the feedback:

Causes of homelessness ~ Barriers to accessing housing and support ~ the main themes were a focus on lack of affordable and suitable accommodation options; lack of awareness about services; failure of services to effectively engage with service users with complex and multiple needs; cuts to funding; problems in previous tenancies such as rent arrears and ASB resulting in exclusions from accommodation; offending histories; welfare reform and

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benefit changes making securing a property, particularly in the private rented sector, difficult; high support needs; lack of floating support services; reluctance to approach services.

How to prevent homelessness ~ responses included a focus on early intervention; debt and money advice; welfare rights and benefits advice; more affordable housing; greater hostel and emergency housing provision including assessment centres; better coordinated and joined up working between agencies; more flexible and less rigid services with a more person centred approach; removal of barriers to existing available housing; better utilisation of the private rented sector to increase housing options; more funding for homelessness services; bringing empty properties back into use; support and mediation to resolve family conflicts

Key issues to address in the Strategy and Delivery ~ suggestions included; address lack of housing supply; improved access to advice services including debt and welfare rights; better joined up services and improved partnership working between agencies; effective planning to mitigate against the impact of Welfare Reform on vulnerable people; better working with private landlords to increase supply of accommodation; continuing investment into floating support, supported housing, assertive outreach and mediation services; a focus on employment and training opportunities; review of rent arrears/debt policies leading to exclusion; explore options to develop shared housing for single people; target basic needs such as food, clothing, fuel, furniture and white goods; increase the provision of emergency accommodation; develop more structured meaningful occupation opportunities for homeless people, residents in hostels and supported housing and those with damaging lifestyles.

Feedback from the consultation exercises has been used to help develop and inform the Delivery Plan which will shape the future work and priorities aimed at preventing homelessness over the next five years. Progress on achieving the various priorities and actions contained within the plan will be monitored by the multi-agency Homelessness Forum.

Summary of achievements in the last 5 years:

As with many other Local Authorities, Wakefield has been forced to make serious budget cuts.

By the end of the 7 year period from the implementation of cuts to Government funding (2011/12 to 2017/18) the Council will have had to identify £152m of recurring budget savings.

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Whilst there is still a need to introduce further cost saving measures we have continued to work well with our partners and have developed new partnerships to progress a number of services to help prevent and tackle homelessness. Some of our achievements to date include:

Integrated the Housing Advice Team within the Vulnerable Adults Service

Agreed a Private Rented Sector Offer policy and procedure to discharge duties under homeless legislation, brought in by the Localism Act 2011

Continued to invest in homelessness prevention schemes such as 'HomeSpace'⁷, 'First Rung'⁸ and Safe@home⁹

Trained staff to deliver housing options advice at the first point of contact.

Developed a comprehensive guide to housing options within the District

Set up the 'Local Welfare Provision' scheme¹⁰

Effectively utilised Government funding and grants and internal resources to prevent loss of accommodation for home owners with financial difficulties¹¹

Improved access into the private rented sector for those looking for accommodation¹²

Carried out a joint review (Wakefield District Housing and the Council) of the housing allocation policy to reflect current guidance and statute ensuring the principles of homelessness prevention and meeting housing needs remain in the forefront of the agreed changes

Contributed to the development of the West Yorkshire "letshelptyou" website along with other Local Authorities

Refurbished our hostel accommodation and increased the number of specially adapted units

Revised the Nominations Agreements with all Registered Providers helping target households in the greatest housing need

Undertaken research into the Private Rented Sector to enable the council to stimulate further growth of the sector

⁷ Homespace - developed by the Council and Wakefield District Housing, the scheme has purchased different types of properties from the open market in order to meet different clients' needs and requirements

⁸ First Rung - developed specifically to help single people aged 16 – 24 years old to secure private rented housing. This is a partnership project between Wakefield Rent Deposit Scheme and Wakefield Council.

⁹ Safe@Home is a specialist 'one stop service' offering advice, support and information to those affected by domestic abuse in the Wakefield district

¹⁰ Replaces Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans – Scheme now run by Personalisation and Assessment Team Wakefield Council. Funded only until 2015 by government grant

¹¹ Preventing Repossession Fund

¹² Homeless Grant, spend to save money

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Developed the Wakefield Responsible Landlords scheme, improving access to the Private Rented Sector for homeless & potentially homeless households

Developed Wakefield's Preventing Rough Sleeping Model

Commissioned the Cold Weather Night Shelter to open during periods of extreme cold weather

In partnership with Riverside ECHG and Wakefield Rent Deposit Scheme created short stay direct access beds at Marsh Way House

Retained essential support services assisting households at risk or vulnerable to homelessness to maintain their tenancy or break the cycle of repeat homelessness

Further invested into resettlement services to assist households in temporary accommodation achieve a settled housing solutions

Worked in partnership with Spectrum¹³ to support some of the districts most vulnerable & excluded households focussing on addressing multiple & complex needs

Revised the Mental Health Special Needs Rehousing Criteria, providing a planned & structured approach to rehousing & limiting crisis situations

Developed a hospital discharge protocol for patients who would be homeless upon discharge

Funded the Reconnections Services via CRI to stranded European National wishing to return to their country of origin

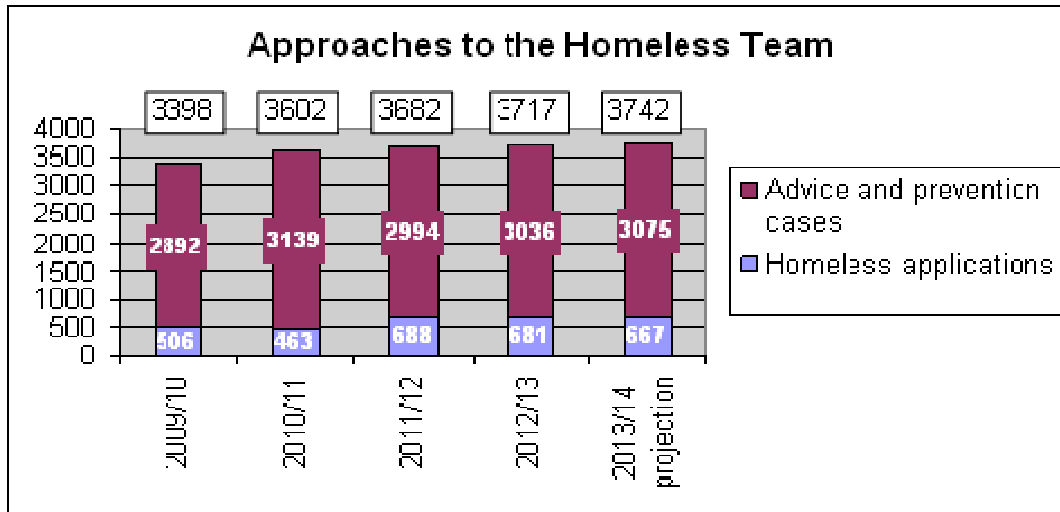
Our Local Experience

Overall cases approaching the homeless team have continued to increase consistently each year since 2009. It is projected that we will be dealing with 344 more approaches for assistance at the end of 2013/14 than we were during 2009/10. That represents an increase of 10% over this five year period.

¹³ Spectrum Community Health CIC provides advice, care and treatment through a range of health and wellbeing services for the people of Wakefield on behalf of the NHS.

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Homeless Approaches



Each day the Homeless Team has a duty team set up to deal with all approaches it receives whether in person, via the telephone or electronically. A Duty Manager is responsible for ensuring all approaches are dealt with appropriately and options will include:

- Whether an approach should be considered under the homeless legislation.
- Following enquiries whether a decision on a homeless application can be made within the working day.
- Whether an interim duty to accommodate the applicant is owed until enquiries can be completed.
- For cases that do not need consideration under the homeless legislation, the duty manager will determine what degree of assistance can be offered to the person with their housing related difficulty. Depending upon capacity and type of case this may be written advice or written advice along with an allocation of a prevention case officer.

The majority of approaches received have a housing related problem and do not necessarily require consideration under the homeless legislation. Some of the approaches are from third parties under existing protocol arrangements and alert us to the fact that a household is at risk of homelessness and allow us to make contact with the household to advise accordingly.

The numbers of approaches that require assessment under the homeless legislation have also increased during the last 5 year period. It is projected that we will be dealing with 161 more homeless applications at the end of 2013/14 then we were during 2009/10. That represents an overall increase of 32% during the period.

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Homeless Applications: Reason for loss of last settled accommodation

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 (figures to 18/11/13)
Loss of lodgings	33%	40%	35%
Loss of rented for reason other than rent arrears	20%	15%	23%
Violence	13%	15%	18%

The Vulnerable Adults Service records the reason an applicant lost their last settled accommodation and loss of lodgings remains the main reason for homelessness, with loss of rented for other reason than arrears being second followed by violence. Although the top three reasons were the same in 2011/12 2012/13 and remain so to date for this year, it is interesting to note that domestic violence has increased from 13% of all applications in 2011/12 to 15% in 2012/13 to currently 18% for this financial year to date. This is an issue that will be referenced for further investigation and analysis in the Delivery Plan as will homelessness resulting from the loss of rented accommodation for reasons other than rent arrears (generally the non-renewal of an assured short-hold tenancy) which has jumped from 15% in 2012/13 to 23% in 2013/14 and may well be the impact of various benefit changes. This could indicate that some landlords are choosing to move away from tenants who depend on housing benefit to meet part of, or the whole of, their housing costs. Loss of lodgings currently account for 35% of all applications for this financial year to date.

Homeless Applications: By age range

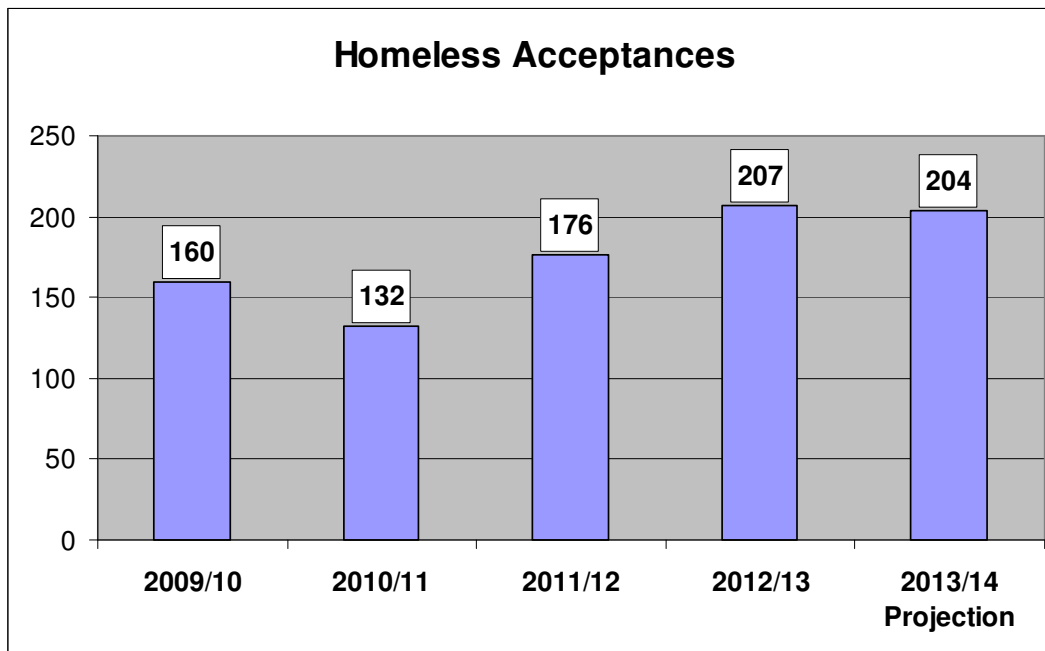
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 (figures to 19/11/13)
16-26	39%	41%	37%
26-36	23%	24%	29%
36-46	23%	21%	19%
46-56	9%	11%	10%
56+	6%	4%	5%

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The majority of homeless applications received come from the age bracket of 16-26 year olds (37%), followed by 26-36 year olds (29%) and then 36-46 year olds (19%). The age bracket of 26-36 year olds has increased from 23% of all applications in 2011/12 to 29% in this financial year which may in part be a result to changes in the benefit system making it more difficult for this client group to secure a property in the private rented sector.

It is projected that approximately 75% of homeless applications made during this financial year will be from single households or childless couples, which is consistent with previous years.

Homeless Acceptances



A Homeless acceptance is where it has been determined by the Homeless Team that a full housing duty is owed to an applicant. A full duty is owed when an applicant meets all of the following criteria:

- Is eligible for assistance,
- Is homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Falls within a category of priority need,
- Is not intentionally homeless.

Homeless acceptances have increased and it is projected that we will be accepting 44 more cases by the end of 2013/14 than we were during 2009/10. That represents an increase of 27.5% and is not surprising in view of the increase in number of homeless applications that are being received.

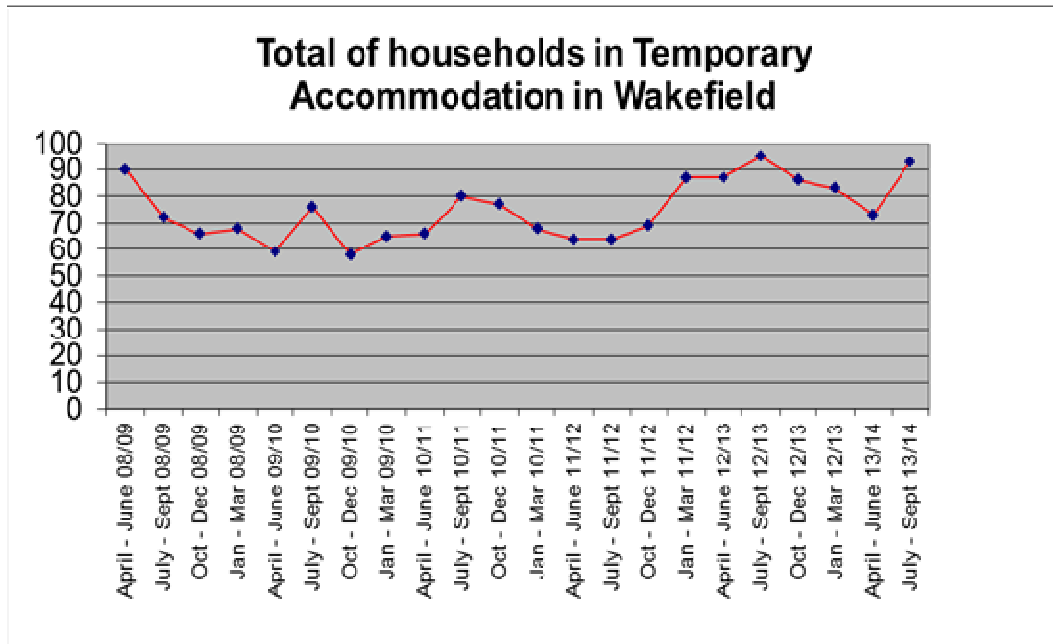
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The main reasons for loss of last settled accommodation to those accepted with a full housing duty are equally split between loss of rented for reason other than arrears and domestic violence which accounts for 60% of all acceptances for this financial year to date. Loss of lodgings is the third main cause of homelessness acceptances at 21%. Historically loss of lodgings has always been the main reason but this year indicates a shift change as it is replaced by loss of rented accommodation and violence.

It is projected that 51% of those accepted during 2013/14 will be from applicants with children and almost 75% of this group will be female lone parents.

Of the 49% accepted that are from single person households or childless couples almost two thirds of that group are from single males.

Use of Temporary Accommodation



In the previous Homeless Strategy, we reported that at the end of the first quarter of the year 2008/09, the numbers in temporary accommodation were 90 and had started to rise again compared to the same quarter of the previous year.

Fortunately, this trend did not continue and at the financial year ends between 2008 and 2013 the numbers hovered between 65 and 87 with this 'one off' peak of 95 at the end of September 2012. The service has worked hard to manage the numbers through effective accommodation management and move on and the figures have remained fairly stable over the last four and a half years.

However, in September 2013, the numbers in temporary accommodation began to rise and this increase has generally been sustained recently.

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We reported a figure of 93 at the end of September 2013 and the prediction is that this slightly higher number will continue in the future.

We have been able to contain the number of service users accommodated in emergency bed and breakfast and the numbers reported at the financial year ends for the same period as above have varied between 0 and 13. The recent increase has meant slightly higher numbers being accommodated, however maximum effort is used to make sure that service users move on out of bed and breakfast as soon as possible and stays kept to a minimum. We have consistently achieved the Government key performance indicator of only using bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families in emergency situations and in such circumstances not for any longer than 6 weeks.

The service is also accommodating a higher number of service users who have more complex needs and more barriers to move on into permanent housing. This leads to longer stays in temporary accommodation while staff work with service users to address barriers and support issues. We are also seeing an increase in the number of homeless service users who have a physical disability and need adapted temporary accommodation. This is more difficult to provide, however we have broadened the portfolio by adapting two of our hostel rooms.

We continue to work with our main partner, Wakefield and District Housing, in the provision of properties for the temporary accommodation portfolio. We have also started work with three other Register Providers, Chevin, Sadeh Lok and Yorkshire Housing who are also looking to assist us by providing properties.

We also work with local private landlords and have a number of privately leased properties used to accommodate vulnerable service users under a homeless duty.

We have two hostels with a total of 17 rooms and over the last five years we have carried out significant improvements to the buildings and facilities. We have completely refurbished the rooms and installed new windows, as well as making improvements to security and facilities.

The future challenges around temporary accommodation will be to continue to provide sufficient good quality accommodation in the face of increasing demand and welfare reform changes. This objective will be particularly difficult if there is sustained demand for adapted property and also if the numbers of complex cases continue to be very high, as it is more difficult to identify suitable accommodation for these service users.

The changes in the benefits system brought about for welfare reform is also predicted to have a significant impact on temporary accommodation, particularly from 2016 onwards when Universal Credit is scheduled to be rolled out nationally. In addition, under current DWP rules, the hostels cannot be deemed

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as supported exempt accommodation which will have a detrimental impact on our future ability to attract an appropriate rate of income for our hostels to allow us to provide the intensive support which service users need.

Future challenges – key issues

The future challenges around preventing homelessness will need to have the capacity to respond in the face of increasing demand and financial austerity.

We will need to find innovative ways of working with our wide range of partners to enable us to realise our strategic outcomes set out in this strategy. We need to focus on increasing our prevention work through securing accommodation in the private and social rented sector, maximising access to support services and ensuring the timely intervention of housing advice and lay advocacy services.

2014 will see the Council adopt a new Housing Allocation Policy. The current allocation policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme known as Homesearch is administered by WDH and assists us to discharge the homeless duty through the award of a Band A priority to homeless households owed the full duty and a Band B to other designated homeless / threatened with homeless applicants. The partnership with WDH in relation to housing allocations and homeless prevention needs to be maintained and developed going forward and embedded in both WDH's and the councils new housing allocation policies in order that the Council's homeless prevention strategies and statutory duties are being discharged effectively¹⁴.

Our temporary accommodation will need to continue to provide sufficient good quality accommodation in sufficient numbers in the face of increasing demand. This objective will be particularly difficult if there is sustained demand for adapted property and also if the numbers of complex cases with multiple needs continues to be very high. There is a need to increase availability of 1 bed properties for single people to occupy.

The increasing number of people with complex and multiple needs including substance abuse, offending, mental health and homelessness approaching both statutory and voluntary sector services and providers of social housing, supported housing and private rented accommodation is of concern. This can only be tackled by effective partnership working and joining up services such as health, housing, offending and substance misuse services.

From a probation perspective homelessness and the lack of suitable accommodation can be a significant factor leading to reoffending.

¹⁴ Wakefield Housing Strategy 2013-2018, Good housing in a thriving 21st Century district

Wakefield Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2019

Wakefield will have more people leaving Custody under 12 month sentences on a Licence and Supervision period for a minimum of 12 months (therefore statutory cases). Probation and housing providers in both the social and private rented sectors will need to continue to work together to ensure wherever possible that accommodation is retained for people serving short custodial sentences and that accommodation is secured for people being released from Custody or where there is an accommodation need for people being managed by probation services in the community.

Those with chaotic and damaging lifestyle will only succeed if services remove barriers that have led to exclusion or poor engagement. This may mean developing new ways of working that will focus on the needs of people with complex and multiple needs. The core principles behind Making Every Adult Matter¹⁵, are already being adopted by some services across the District and there is a real opportunity to build on this approach through effective engagement with the Big Lottery funded West Yorkshire Multiple & Complex Needs Project due to be rolled out across West Yorkshire in 2014.

Increasingly we will need to use existing resources more innovatively. The delivery of housing related support and its continued success in offering vulnerable people the opportunity to improve the quality of their life is not only crucial to this strategy but also to helping people create stable environments in which they can gain and maintain greater personal independence.

Housing and support providers will need to ensure support and accommodation services are delivered in a way that is effective and relevant to different client groups. Effective engagement strategies will need to be prioritised to ensure services make a positive impact on the person's ability to overcome the impact of homelessness.

Homelessness and housing-related support services deliver cost savings to public service budgets and better outcomes for vulnerable people.

They improve health, reduce re-offending, support people into education, training and employment, reduce inequalities and social costs and represent good value for money.

The more services can support people to move away from homelessness and towards independent living, the more they can reduce their expensive use of public services, and so be more cost efficient.

Homeless Link: MP's briefing 2014

¹⁵ An approach to helping areas design and deliver coordinated services

Wakefield Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2019

We have already signed up to the Government's Gold Standard challenge to demonstrate our commitment to preventing homelessness, to ensuring provision and access to services is available and that advice, information and assistance is accessible. We will strive to continuously improve homeless, housing options and advice services by working towards and achieving the 10 challenges that underpin the Gold Standard programme.

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

The Delivery Plan shows the key targets to be achieved throughout the five year life of this strategy. These targets are structured around four key strategic drivers:

- Maintain a focus on effective homelessness prevention services
- Develop the Role of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) to address housing need, homelessness and the homelessness prevention agenda
- Improve service delivery and offer a modern, fit for purpose, homelessness response that offers sustainable solutions to a range of housing needs
- Maximise and effectively deploy resources in order to respond to current and future homelessness demands

Under each of these strategic priorities are targets with identified lead agencies. Progress against these targets will be subject to an annual review in April for each year that the Strategy covers i.e. April 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

Strategic Priority 1 – Maintain a focus on effective homelessness prevention services				
	Target	Milestones/Key Activity	Lead Agencies	Progress at annual review
1	Maintain a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has 'buy in' across all LA and partner services	Robust Homelessness Strategy agreed for the district to successfully prevent 85% or more of cases approaching the Homeless Team with housing difficulties from becoming homeless	Wakefield Council Partner agencies Wakefield Homelessness Forum	
2	Review the provision of accommodation options, including emergency accommodation for households not meeting the statutory threshold under the homelessness legislation	<p>Review existing provision for non-priority homeless households.</p> <p>Work with landlords and other partners to increase the availability of shared housing</p> <p>Successful development of a sub-regional Rent a Room Scheme in partnership with other West Yorkshire LA's</p> <p>Identify gaps in provision and produce an options report with recommendations for improving services to this client group (April 2015)</p>	Vulnerable Adults Service Housing Providers Partner Agencies	

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

3	Improve services targeting service users with multiple and complex needs	<p>Contribute to the successful roll out of the West Yorkshire Finding Independence programme (December 2014)</p> <p>Consider options for the continued delivery of the Vulnerable Adults Advocacy Project beyond March 2015</p>	<p>Vulnerable Adults Service Spectrum Community Health DISC/Big Lottery Programme Wakefield Homelessness Forum Wakefield Locality Group</p>	
4	Work with Registered Providers to ensure rent arrears and debt policies do not unduly exclude vulnerable and homeless applicants from accommodation	<p>Analyse housing allocation policies to identify barriers linked to debts</p> <p>Agree flexibilities in policies with RP's to address the needs of excluded vulnerable groups</p>	<p>Registered Providers Vulnerable Adults Service</p>	
5	Review homeless and homeless prevention services in relation to presentations resulting from incidents of domestic violence	<p>Understand the reasons why homeless applications and acceptances seem higher in Wakefield than other LA areas</p> <p>Develop an action plan to improve homeless prevention services for victims of domestic abuse (April 2015).</p>	<p>Vulnerable Adults Service Safe at Home Team Police</p>	
6	Where possible retain accommodation for people serving short term custodial sentences and secure accommodation for people being released from custody or being managed by Probation services in the community		<p>Probation Accommodation providers</p>	

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

Strategic Priority 2 – Develop the Role of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) to address housing need, homelessness and the homelessness prevention agenda				
	Target	Milestones/Key Activity	Lead Agencies	Progress at annual review
7	Explore new powers to discharge the full homeless duty into the private rented sector is utilised effectively (Private Rented Sector Offer)	<p>New policy agreed by Cabinet (April 2014)</p> <p>Procedures are developed to discharge the homeless duty into the private rented sector (December 2014)</p>	<p>Vulnerable Adults Service</p> <p>Strategic Housing</p> <p>Private Landlords and Letting Agents</p>	
8	Promote and develop the Wakefield Responsible Landlord Scheme (WRLS)	Expand the number of properties accredited through the WRLS by 350 p.a.	<p>Strategic Housing</p> <p>Vulnerable Adults Service</p>	
9	Broaden the landlord base of properties held within the Temporary Accommodation portfolio to include more properties leased from private landlords and a mix of Registered Providers	<p>Identification of suitable property owners willing to lease accommodation for this purpose</p> <p>Assess whether Welfare Reform and Universal Credit changes allow for a sustainable and financially viable model (April 2015)</p>	<p>Vulnerable Adults Service</p> <p>Registered Providers</p> <p>Private Landlords</p>	
10	Continue to explore ways to bring empty properties back into use	Help to bring at least 280 empty homes back into use p.a.	Strategic Housing	

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

11	Undertake an options appraisal into establishing a Social Lettings Agency (SLA)	<p>Undertake initial research into different models and options (December 2014)</p> <p>Produce an options report with recommendations as to how or whether to progress an SLA in the district (April 2015)</p>	<p>Vulnerable Adults Service Strategic Housing Private Landlords and Lettings Agents</p>
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Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

Strategic Priority 3 – Improve Service Delivery and offer a modern, fit for purpose, homelessness response that offers sustainable solutions to a range of housing needs				
	Target	Milestones/Key Activity	Lead Agencies	Progress at annual review
12	Actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment, training needs and opportunities for meaningful occupation for homeless people	Establish a support, education, employment, training & meaningful occupation sub group of the Homelessness Forum to take this work forward (December 2014)	Vulnerable Adults Service Partner Agencies Wakefield Homelessness Forum DWP NOVA	
13	Have a Homelessness Strategy that sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging need	Effective review and delivery of the strategy. Implementation monitored at the Homeless Forum	Vulnerable Adults Service Wakefield Homelessness Forum	
14	Monitor the Homesearch Housing Allocation Policy to ensure it gives reasonable preference to homeless and urgent housing need cases and addresses the needs of vulnerable groups and the homelessness prevention agenda	Agree with WDH key performance data required from Homesearch to monitor this target and produce quarterly monitoring reports commencing April 2015 to be shared with key stakeholders	Vulnerable Adults Service Wakefield and District Housing Registered Providers Wakefield Homelessness Forum	
15	Use the Homelessness Forum to continue to share good practice and information around homeless prevention services and the impact of Welfare Reform	Multi agency Homelessness Forum meeting regularly	Wakefield Homelessness Forum Vulnerable Adults Service	

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

16	Explore options for the continuation of preventing rough sleeping services continue beyond April 2015	Specification developed and funding successfully identified to procure the services beyond April 2015.	Vulnerable Adults Service Partner Agencies	
17	Work with the Discretionary Housing Payments and Local Welfare Provision Team to ensure support for the homelessness prevention agenda is maintained	Effective links and referral arrangements are maintained and developed with teams administering DHP and LWP	Vulnerable Adults Service Housing Benefit Service/LWP Team	
18	Improve and promote awareness about local services across the district that can help address and prevent homelessness	<p>Review and where necessary update content of websites & leaflets (December 2014)</p> <p>Link with Area Working arrangements to target services at areas of greatest need (April 2015)</p> <p>Use established networks and forums to promote services</p>	Vulnerable Adults Service Partner Agencies Wakefield Homelessness Forum	

Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan 2014-2019

Strategic Priority 4 – Maximise and effectively deploy resources in order to respond to current and future homelessness demands				
	Target	Milestones/Key Activity	Lead Agencies	Progress at annual review
19	Where possible maximise funding opportunities that become available to prevent homelessness	<p>Identification of possible funding streams and opportunities.</p> <p>Successful bids made to help develop homeless prevention services across the district.</p> <p>Promote take up of the Bond Guarantee Scheme to help people access private rented accommodation</p>	Vulnerable Adults Service Partner Agencies Wakefield Homelessness Forum	
20	Where possible eliminate the use of hotels as a source of temporary accommodation.	<p>A suitable and flexible temporary accommodation portfolio is available to mitigate against the use of hotels</p> <p>Homeless households are not placed into hotels</p>	Vulnerable Adults Service Housing Providers	
21	Work with partners to maximise the supply of Affordable Housing in the District	30% of all new homes built to be affordable homes	Strategic Housing Housing Providers	
22	Consider options with Registered Providers and private landlords to convert low demand family housing into smaller single person lets	Promote take up of the Council's new House in Multiple Occupation Loan for WRLS accredited private landlords	Vulnerable Adults Service	